

[Under the Bridge]

Beliefs & Customs - Folk stuff

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK [6?] Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Herman Spector

ADDRESS 701 Crotona Park North, Bronx

DATE November 25, 1938

SUBJECT UNDER THE BRIDGE

1. Date and time of interview November 22, 1938
2. Place of interview Near Fulton Fish Market, New York City
3. Name and address of informant
4. Name and address of person, if any who put you in touch with informant.
5. Name and address of person, if any accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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Informant is an anonymous tramp, born in Holland, a city beachcomber whose haunt is the East Side waterfront, near the Fulton Fish district. Despite his ragged state, he possesses a certain quiet confidence and is never servile or obsequious. Middle-aged, he has reddish hair, watery but unwavering blue eyes, and broken stubs of teeth. He wears a cap, open denim shirt, and frayed, ill-matched jacket and pants.

As I interviewed him, he stood close by a Negro who was eviscerating salvaged fish over a drain....

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NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

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DATE November 25, 1938

SUBJECT UNDER THE BRIDGE

Dem good fish, sure. See: when it is here red (indicating gills,) is good to eat. Odderwise, no. I know all kinds fish, sure. Been fisherman twenty years. Old time ships? Worked on beam trawler, odder ships. Seen 37 countries, dot's all. Now on de bum, sure, I don't care. Eat, go anyplace I want, do what I like. You tink I care about rich man? Rich man can't sleep. I sleep good - nobody gotta worry about me. Can rich man go by himself? I answer you every question - no. He gotta have bodyguard. Dey trow bum (bomb) at him. I take walk across bridge, I go on South Street, wait on line Lodging House. Who care for me,

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who trow bum? Why? I got nottink. Gee Pee Morgan - you know dis man? - why dey trow bum in his place? Dey liking him? No, dey got hate for dis man.

I like to be like dis. I am Robinson Caruso, giff me island, I be by myself. What I need automats, telephone? I got no worry. I eat - not so good ., but sometink. Drepression? Yes. All over is de same. I don't want to hear from odder country; I don't want to mix in it. Dis is best country for me. Man can travel - on odder side, tink you can do dis? I answer you every question - no. Sure I know, I come from one dem countries. No, not Germany - Holland. I got no use dem dictators. Even Mission preacher, he say: I hate 2 dictator. When he say dis himself, dis mus' be true. Here(addressing Negro,) dot's wrong way. Cot fish like dis ... so!

Over here is good, but not built up like odder side. Don't tell about dem buildings. High? If dey get stone in old country, make twice more high. Dot bridge - yah, dot is wondaful ting. Dis engineer is big man who make dis. Frenchman. He don't tink he will make, kills himself. I know. I am only dummy, but I now dis is great man. He tinks he don't make it, but he makes it. Sure, he mus' get labor, he mus' get machine, but he is got head . . .

Good dot way? (to Negro) Goes faster, huh? . . . Tell you wot I tink. Once I got money, sure, I live on highclass street Hoboken, Elevent' Street. Not so highclass, I do' know, still good class for workingman. Dem times I got job, pay fifty dollar mont' rent. Now (shrug,) no job. Live like dis. LaGuardie not de fault. If he knows, he changes. You know who is de fault? I answer you every question. Racketeers; dem de fault. (Negro leaves-with full pail-load of cast-off fish, saying: "Gotta get ice now!")

No. he don't eat dem. He sell dem fish. How much he makes? He makes fifty cents I betchoo. Me? Why I gotta do dot? I got enough what I want. I don't starve. Gee Pee Morgan . . . (etc.)